

# **The New York Public Library**

## **Storytime Guidelines**



**Youth Education Services, 2016**  
**cover art by Ruth Rodriguez, Francis Martin Library**

# Early Childhood Literacy @ NYPL

In FY 2015 the City Council of New York and The New York Public Library designated funding to support a citywide early literacy program, City's First Readers. Simultaneously, the library developed a new strategic plan that prioritizes services to our youngest patrons and their families.

Libraries are the reading institution. Our goal is to make sure our users, neighborhoods, and city benefit from the focused attention to reading and literacy that we can provide.

Our goal: Reinvest in early childhood literacy and the work of our children's librarians so that the youngest members of our communities have a good start of the journey of lifelong learning.

Our Early Childhood Literacy program guidelines are based on NYPL's Institute of Museum of a Library Services (IMLS) funded training: Raising the Bar: *Integrating Early Childhood Education Training into Librarian Professional Development*, and *Every Child Ready to Read 2*, a national research based program developed by PLA (the Public Library Association) and ALSC (the Association for Library Service to Children).

NYPL Librarians use three main strategies to be effective Early Literacy Specialists:

1. Building strong, lasting relationships with families
2. Modeling and fostering interactions that are responsive to children's developmental needs and
3. Creating welcoming and engaging environments for children and their families to learn and play together.

NYPL uses the following approaches to learning to promote the building of appreciation and Enjoyment of Books/print motivation, Letter Knowledge, Print Awareness, Phonological Awareness, expressive language, letter knowledge and narrative skills in our storytimes:

Attention  
Curiosity  
Persistence  
Initiative  
Inventiveness  
Reflection and Interpretation

## **Enhanced Early Literacy Storytime Programs for Babies, Toddlers, Preschoolers and their Families**

### **Baby Storytime** for ages Birth-18 Months

Reading readiness begins at birth and our programs for the youngest children and their caregivers always include great books, fun songs, silly wiggles, lots of language and time to get to know the other families your neighborhood.

### **Toddler Storytime** for ages 18 Months- 3 Years

Once your child begins to walk, they belong in toddler story time where they will sing and move, begin to recognize letters, share wonderful books, and develop pre-reading skills.

### **Preschool Storytime** for ages 3 to 5 Years

The latest books and old favorites help introduce your preschooler to new vocabulary and reinforce learning. In preschool story time, children and their caregivers will enjoy stories, songs, rhymes and movement while building language and literacy skills.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Foster a love of reading in children of all ages through engaging, literacy-based activities.
- Share and nurture the love of books by reading, singing, and rhyming with children and their parents
- Empower parents and caregivers to see themselves as their child's first educator
- Provide a space for parents and caregivers to lovingly engage with their child
- Provide a space where young children can enthusiastically engage in literacy activities
- Facilitate cognitive and language development
- Introduce early literacy skills and practice to children and their caregivers (see below for detailed information on the skills)
- Facilitate the development of fine and gross motor skills
- Model ways parents and caregivers can engage their children at home
- Reinforce learning while preparing children for school.

*When planning your storytime, remember that you are promoting the skills and practices of early literacy that prepare a child's brain for a lifetime of learning. The practices support the skills!*

**Narrative Skills** are all about storytelling and understanding how stories work.

Narrative skills rely on expressive language skills such as vocabulary use and being able to describe things. As children develop from birth to five they start to think **representationally**, to make connections between ideas, learn to tell events in order, engage in extended dramatic play, and re-tell and make up stories. Narrative skills are key to later reading comprehension skills and writing skills.

**Print Motivation, or Appreciation and Enjoyment of Books**, means that reading is a pleasurable activity and a way to gain information. Research has linked enjoyment of reading to greater frequency of reading and higher reading levels.

Children's librarians' unique role is to inspire a love of reading. When librarians have **relationships** with the children and families who come to their branch they can provide the book that will be most delightful to each child.

**Expressive language**, including vocabulary development, means children's verbal attempts to communicate.

Librarians acknowledge the importance of, and model, reciprocal **interactions** that extend children's communicative attempts.

**Phonological awareness** is the ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units.

Librarians model **interactions** that will best support children's learning at each developmental level. For example, a librarian may model how to use a rhyming song to support toddler's phonological development.

**Print awareness**, including letter knowledge, means understanding what print looks like, how it works, and that there is a connection between oral and written language.

When librarians create **welcoming spaces** for children, they give them opportunities to learn about letters in different ways: through puzzles, alphabet blocks, alphabet books, big books and simple words posted at children's eye level. Librarians also use writing as a powerful form of **interacting** that is available for children at all ages: creating spaces that welcome children to scribble, write their names, and dictate stories.

**Listening Comprehension** is the ability to understand the meaning of words or stories.

Children build knowledge by making connections about topics that are interesting to them. Librarians who have **relationships** with children and families are able to guide them to books that extend their learning. Librarians use open-ended questions in their **interactions** with pre-school age children to build their comprehension of stories.

*These skills translate to the 5 practices we promote everyday!*

- *READING, TALKING, SINGING, WRITING AND PLAYING*

## **Tips for Success:**

- For new storytime leaders: attend trainings, have a mentor, observe their storytimes, conduct your first few storytimes with an experienced librarian by your side if possible
- Don't feel obligated to do storytime the same way you've seen it done, make it your own so you are comfortable!
- Be sure to interact with parents/caregivers at the beginning and end of story time. Introduce yourself, ask names and ages (of little ones), and give newcomers a special welcome.
- Enthusiasm - be a kid yourself!
- It's okay to make mistakes -- you can use it as a teaching moment
- Change it up every now and then
- Repeat opening and closing songs/rhymes to establish a routine
- When introducing new songs and/or fingerplays, make sure you repeat several times so parents and caregivers can get the hang of them. Plus, repetition is always great for little ones.
- Adapt your storytime (especially your volume and tone) to the size of your group
- Encourage parents to participate throughout the whole storytime!
- Gauge varying levels of attention spans and adjust the pace accordingly
- Introduce new materials sparingly – rotate already-known songs, rhymes, and activities to maintain familiarity
- Don't focus on reading books word for word – interject sounds and voices; be animated!
- Write out a schedule on a whiteboard or handout so that parents may follow along – don't worry about sticking to it exactly!
- Bring extra copies of books because children and parents might want to check them out
- If you have a small group, sit on the carpet to interact with babies and caregivers (whenever possible) to help create a warm and friendly environment
- SEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES ATTACHMENT for tips on engaging caregivers

## **Notes on Early Literacy Asides:**

- Early literacy asides are research-based reasons for why a storytime activity or practice supports early literacy skills. NO NEED TO MEMORIZE these; write them down and read them out!
- Delivering one or two early literacy asides in a quiet moment, before or after an activity (during transitions), can enhance your storytime and empower caregivers to work on these skills at home.

# Guidelines for Baby Storytime

## **The audience:**

- Babies (roughly Birth-18 months)
- Parents
- Childcare providers

**Time:** 20-60 minutes (60 minutes, only if including free play at end of storytime)

## **Tips for success:**

- Generally, babies prefer softer, gentler, high pitched vocals compared to toddlers or preschool aged children, but adjust your volume to the size of the group
- Use as many tactile materials and props as possible, especially ones to give out to parents and caregivers to keep babies engaged
- If you have a small group, sit on the carpet to interact with babies and caregivers (whenever possible) to help create a warm and friendly environment

## **Suggested materials:**

- Shakers
- Soft blocks
- Board books for babies to interact with
- Puppets
- Storytime rug or mats
- Stacking toys, manipulatives, soft toys (optional, for play at the end to work on motor skills, socialization, etc)
- Parachute (optional)
- Sanitizing materials

## **What to look for when choosing books for babies:**

- Books with lots of repetition, rhymes, patterns, and songs
- Books that feature pictures of other babies (babies love to see this!)
- Bright, colorful illustrations with pop ups, lift-the-flaps, etc
- Books that encourage distinctive sounds--animal noises, beeps or train sounds, etc.
- Books that encourage parent/caregiver participation, songs they can sing along to, or sounds they can make with you

## **Favorite Books:**

- Goodnight Moon
- Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes
- The Baby Goes Beep
- Roar, Roar, Baby!

- Do Cows Meow?
- Moo, Baa, La La la!
- The Babies on the Bus
- Peek-a-moo!
- Peekaboo Morning
- I Kissed the Baby!
- Clip-Clap
- Toot Toot, Beep Beep
- *Favorite Authors:* Karen Katz, Leslie Patricelli, Donald Crews, Rachel Isadroa

**The resources:**

- JBrary: Baby Storytime
- Baby Brain Map

**Sample Structure:**

*Storytime (20-30 minutes)*

1. Introduce yourself - welcome - make announcements (if any) - go over guidelines (mostly for parents): silence your phones, participate with your kids, be present in the activity.
- *TIP:* To get the attention of large, noisy crowds, use a whistle, bell, or tambourine! If necessary, use a portable microphone or headset during the program so you don't lose your voice!
2. Greeting Song, the same every week! This is a great time to introduce a puppet to use throughout storytime.
  3. Read the first book.
  4. Sing 2 interactive songs or rhymes/fingerplays
  5. Deliver 1st early literacy aside
  6. Read the second book.
  7. Sing 2 interactive songs or rhymes/fingerplays. Try to use some shakers, scares or other tactile objects.
  8. Deliver 2nd early literacy aside
  9. Read the third book.
  10. Sing 2 interactive songs or rhymes/fingerplays.
  11. If there is time and babies are engaged, read a fourth book.
  12. Closing song, the same every week!
- *Large group adaptation:* Read only 2 books, and sing more interactive songs

*Free play (30 minutes)*

13. Transition to free exploratory play. Playing recorded music and blowing bubbles while getting out toys, etc is a good way to do this.
14. Collect any materials used at this time, doing so during the storytime is disruptive.
15. Pass out handouts, and talk with parents/caregivers and babies

**Sample Early Literacy Asides:**

- Research finds that speaking in “parentese”, the sing-songy, soft, or high pitched voice we naturally use with little ones, keeps babies’ attention longer than using your regular voice! Watch your babies as we read this book together using lots of silly voices.
- Singing slows down language. When you sing to your child, you are helping them hear the sounds of words more easily. Even if you don’t think you have a great voice, singing breaks the syllables of words down into notes, which helps babies develop skills they will later need to sound out words.

# Guidelines for Toddler Storytime

## **The audience:**

- Toddlers (roughly 18 months - 2.5 years)
- Parents
- Caregivers

**Time:** 30-60 minutes (60 minutes, only if including free play at end of storytime)

## **Tips for success:**

- Understand that there will be a variety of behavior and abilities in this group--18 months and 2.5 years look very different!
- It is easier to follow the direction of the group than to try and force them to sit and be quiet. If toddlers are restless, have everybody stand up and get the wiggles out, have a short dance party break, etc. See Transition Tips and Movement Breaks attachment for help!
- Engage toddlers by asking them to use their bodies, e.g. “Who can find their heads?” rather than saying, “What part of my body is this?” This also works well for shyer kids of all ages.
- If you have a small group, sit on the carpet to interact with toddlers and caregivers (whenever possible) to help create a warm and friendly environment

## **Suggested materials:**

- 2-3 books
- Felt-board
- Big books
- Scarves
- Puppets
- Eggs
- Parachute
- Music
- White board

## **What to look for when choosing books for toddlers:**

- Stories with lots of action, that move quickly
- Books with objects to name and identify
- Songs in picture book format
- Stories with sensory appeal – textures, smells, and sounds
- Books about toddlers’ special interests – trains, animals, dinosaurs, daily routines, etc.
- Stories that encourage interactions and movement
- Pages with flaps or moveable parts
- Bright, colorful, simple illustrations
- Books that introduce colors and numbers

- Simple plots and predictable endings

#### **Favorite books:**

- Hooray for Fish
- Monkey and Me
- Seals on the Bus
- I Went Walking
- Dinosaurs, Dinosaurs
- Wow! Ocean
- Butterfly, Butterfly: A Book of Colors
- Jump!
- I Ain't Gonna Paint No More
- Where is the Green Sheep?
- *Favorite Authors:* Denise Fleming, Lucy Cousins, Jane Cabrera, Steve Light

#### **The resources:**

- JBrary: Toddler Storytime
- Toddler Developmental Milestones

#### **Sample structure:**

*Storytime* (30 minutes)

1. Announce beginning of storytime: ask parents to silence phones, participate, be present with their kids and save conversations for the end. Do a quick activity that gets everyone quiet and paying attention. Ex: See who can blow the biggest bubble!  
→ *TIP:* To get the attention of large, noisy crowds, use a whistle, bell, or tambourine.
2. Opening song, rhyme or ritual, the same every week!
3. Action rhymes and/or songs. While introducing new songs/rhymes is good, be sure to repeat ones from earlier sessions. Do each song/rhyme at least twice, accompanied by clapping and other movements. Gauge your audience's interest level to determine number of repeats.
4. Insert 1st Early Literacy Aside
5. Read first book.  
Start with the longest one!
6. Action rhymes /songs with movement, at least one that requires them to get up and be physical, e.g. Five Little Monkeys, Shake My Sillies Out, or Head & Shoulders. Do each at least twice.
7. Insert 2nd Early Literacy Aside
8. Book or alternative format (felt-board, puppet, big book, etc.). If children are listening well and engaged, repeat steps 4 and 5.
9. Pass out musical instruments, scarves, parachutes, etc. and sing 2-3 action songs.
10. Closing song, rhyme, or ritual, the same every week!

*Free Play* (30 minutes)

11. Transition to free exploratory play. Playing recorded music and blowing bubbles while getting out toys, etc is a good way to do this.
12. Collect any materials used at this time, doing so during the storytime is disruptive.
13. Pass out handouts, and talk with parents/caregivers and toddlers

**Sample Early Literacy Asides:**

- Print awareness is an important early literacy skill. We see print all around us. When your toddler notices a stop sign or the sign for their favorite restaurant, they are “reading” the sign!
- We handed out coloring pages today because coloring is fun, and because writing starts with scribbling. Encouraging your child to draw is important--don’t worry about “perfect” drawings or letters, those are skills your child will develop over time.

# Guidelines for Preschool Storytime

## **The audience:**

- Three to Five year olds
- Parents
- Caregivers

**Time:** 30-60+ minutes (60+ minutes, only if including free play and/or craft at end of storytime)

## **Tips for Success:**

- Ask open-ended questions
- Remember that they are beginning to socialize at this age, so songs and rhymes that safely engage their neighbor are fun!
- Recap a story during and after reading
- Introduce each book: title, author, illustrator, and topic/theme
- If you have a small group, sit on the carpet to interact with preschoolers and caregivers (whenever possible) to help create a warm and friendly environment

## **Suggested materials:**

- 2-3 books
- Felt-board
- Big books
- Scarves
- Puppets
- Maracas
- Drums
- Rhythm sticks
- Music
- White board
- Handouts (given at the end, as to not distract parents/caregivers) with song lyrics, coloring pages, etc

## **What to look for when choosing books for preschoolers:**

- Simple, clear, language and colorful pictures
- Longer stories with interesting characters, humor, and irony
- Stories with a good plot, with action and description
- A combination of short and long books
- Stories that talk about family, friends, school, and relationships
- ABC and counting books
- Concept books – colors, opposites, sizes
- Guessing game books
- Nonfiction books that explain the world and the creatures in it

- Rhyming stories and songs
- Stories that promote interaction between the reader and the listener

**Favorite books:**

- Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes
- No, David!
- Bear Snores On
- Moo!
- Get Out Of My Bath!
- Press Here
- Dog's Colorful Day
- Who Ate All the Cookie Dough?
- Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!
- Friendshape
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt
- *Favorite Authors: Mo Willems, Eric Litwin, Mem Fox, Lindsay Craig*

**The resources:**

- Preschooler Developmental Milestones
- Storytime Katie
- Silly Librarian

**Sample Structure:**

*Storytime (30-45 minutes)*

1. Announce beginning of storytime: ask parents to silence phones, participate, be present with their kids and save conversations for the end. Do a quick activity that gets everyone quiet and paying attention.  
Ex: See who can blow the biggest bubble!
2. Opening song, rhyme, or ritual, the same every week!
3. Read the first book. Start with the longest one!
4. One to two rhymes, songs, or fingerplays (depending on their length)
5. Insert 1st Early Literacy Aside
6. Read the second book.
7. One or two rhymes that get them to stand up and move their bodies, e.g. Five Little Monkeys, Head & Shoulders, Shake My Sillies Out. Do each twice.
8. Insert 2nd Early Literacy Aside
9. Book or alternative format story (felt-board, puppet, big book, etc.)
10. Interactive song or fingerplay with puppets, scarves, or musical instruments
11. Closing song, rhyme, or ritual, the same every week!

*Free play and/or Craft (30+ minutes)*

12. Transition to free exploratory play and/or craft project. Playing recorded music and blowing bubbles while getting out toys, etc is a good way to do this.
13. Collect any materials used at this time, doing so during the storytime is disruptive.
14. Pass out handouts, and talk with parents/caregivers and preschoolers

**Sample Early Literacy Asides:**

- Singing the alphabet song is one way children learn the names of letters. You can sing the alphabet to different tunes--try singing it to “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” It’s not as easy as it sounds!
- Research shows children benefit most from learning the sound and letter name at the same time. For example, explain that the letter W is called W and makes a “Wa” sound. Start with letters that have special meaning, like the letters in their name, and try writing the letter down too!

# Guidelines for Family Storytime

## The Audience:

- Birth-6 year olds
- Parents
- Caregivers

**Time:** 30-60 minutes

## Tips for Success:

- Take a look at who is present that day and amend your plans accordingly. For example, if you have mostly babies that day you don't want to do mostly standing/dancing songs or books that require participation.
- Involve the families! Make sure parents have opportunities to sing and rhyme with their little ones, and remember that this is a special time for them because often age cutoffs in programs mean they can't bring siblings along.
- Be flexible--Expect this storytime to be looser and more spontaneous than others because you are involving children of all ages.

## Materials:

- Books
- Craft Supplies
- Bubbles
- Puppets
- Ukuleles, shakers, and other instruments
- CD Player

## What to look for when choosing books for families:

- Choose interactive, colorful books with something for everyone! Babies like sing-songy rhymes and colorful pictures, toddlers love silly noises, all families will love to clap and sing along or repeat words.
- Try choosing beloved classics that families have seen at home, i.e. anything by Eric Carle, Mo Willems, or any of your most popular picture books! Familiarity is the name of the game here.
- Choose books that you can adapt easily. For example, "Chicka, Chicka, Boom Boom" can be read while caregivers help little babies clap along, but can work well with older children who can help you along with the alphabet, tell you which letter will come back, answers questions like "What do you think will happen when all the letters are at the top of the tree?" etc.

## Favorite Books:

- Who Says Moo
- Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom

- The Family Book
- Tap the Magic Tree
- Go Away, Big Green Monster!
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- Frederick
- The Snowy Day
- LMNO Peas
- The Book With No Pictures
- Where the Wild Things Are
- Owl Babies
- *Favorite Authors:* Salina Yoon, Eric Carle, Maurice Sendak, Leo Lionni

#### **Resources:**

- Siblings Storytime
- ALSC Family Storytime

#### **Sample Structure:**

1. Introductions and Guidelines. Ask parents to turn off phones and be present and engage with their children, tell them that this is a storytime designed for families to engage with each other.
2. Welcome song, rhyme, or ritual, the same every week!
3. Picture walk to activate prior knowledge! A picture walk is previewing all the picture of the book, pointing out objects, colors, etc., asking children if they have any thoughts or predictions.
4. Insert 1st Early Literacy Aside
5. Read book aloud
6. Response to read aloud, ask if children have a favorite part, etc. If the story is about beach, ask who else has been to the beach, etc.
7. 2 Songs or rhyme activities. Use lots of props! An all-purpose instrument bag is a great idea for this storytime.
8. Insert 2nd Early Literacy Aside
9. If the group is engaged and time is okay, repeat steps 3-6.
10. Closing song, rhyme, or ritual--the same every week!

#### **Sample Early Literacy Asides:**

- Go ahead and use words that are unfamiliar to your children. Don't replace words in books they may not understand, explain them! And try and find ways to introduce new words--for example, if you see a golden retriever on the street, say "Look at that golden retriever! That's a type of dog!"
- Helping your children associate books and reading with joy and positivity, supports a skill called print motivation, which is interest in books and reading. Researchers say that children who have enjoyable associations with books and reading are more likely to stick with learning to read, even if it's difficult.

# General Guidelines

## Resources:

- Every Child Ready to Read : this is a great resource when thinking about promoting early literacy and early literacy asides.
- Storytime Share : this is a great forum with ideas for storytimes
- Saroj Ghoting's Early Lit : this website has songs, planning worksheets, and tons of free literature
- Jbrary : tips, resources and professional development for storytime success

## Reporting Attendance:

Drupal: Check out [Lair](#) for reporting details (insert link when created)

## Evaluating the Program:

- Remember that it takes time to build an audience, so starting small is okay
- Adjust schedule to suit community--if attendance is low, issue survey to families to pick best date and time
- Check if there are language barriers and how you might be able to combat them--signage in multiple languages, counting to five or saying hello and goodbye in different languages, etc
- Look at your community and see if the numbers are representative
- Adjust length and structure based on parent and caregiver response--if they are talking during storytime, give them more time to socialize before or after. If they are sitting quietly instead of participating, pass out lyric sheets before storytime starts.
- Watch how children are behaving during storytime--if they are having attention issues or are running around excessively, try mixing up the structure, adding songs in between books that require everyone to stand up and move, using more recorded music to save your voice, etc. See Transition Tips attachment for help!

# Transitions

Transitions are an important part of running a smooth and effective program for young children. They help prepare children for what comes next as well as work to lessen the chance for meltdowns and distractions. Intentionally including transitions throughout a program can provide structure, routine and effective time management. The following transitions can be implemented between activities, especially when there is movement from one area of the library (the storytime rug) to another (tables) or at any point during the program when you notice children need to get their wiggles out!

**Line Up By** (for three and up, for use to move from one area to another)

Have the children move to the next area of the program by calling out a specific category. Or, if seated, have children Raise Your Hand If...instead of lining up.

“Get up and move to tables/rug if you...”

- Are wearing \_\_\_\_ (color)
- Have a \_\_\_\_ (pet, brother, sister)
- Were born in \_\_\_\_ (month)
- Like to eat \_\_\_\_ (food)

**If You Can Hear Me** (for toddlers and up)

“If you can hear me...” (in a quiet voice)

- Tap your shoulder
- Pat your head
- Wiggle your fingers
- Put your hands in your lap

**Put your Hands** (for toddlers and up)

“Put your hands...”

- Up high
- Behind your back
- On your head
- In your lap

**Catch a Bubble!** (for toddlers and up)

Instruct the children to try to catch a bubble in their mouths

**Follow the Leader** (for threes and up)

Make yourself the leader to begin and have children stand up and follow your movements

- Stand up
- Sit down
- Jumping jacks
- Pat your head and rub your belly

# Sample Storytime Songs

## Welcome Songs

[To the Tune of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’]

**Welcome, welcome, everyone**

Now you’re here, let’s have some fun

First We’ll clap our hands just so,

And then we’ll reach and touch our toes,

Welcome, welcome, everyone

Let’s sit down to start our fun!

## **Come Along and Sing With Me,**

Sing with me,

Sing with me,

Come along and sing with me,

It’s time for storytime!

[Repeat for Bounce, Clap.]

## Shaker/Prop Songs

[To the tune of “London Bridge is Falling Down”]

**Shake your shakers in the air,**

Shake them here, shake them there

Shake your shakers in the air

Shake your shakers!

Shake your shakers high, high, high

Shake them high, touch the sky!

Shake your shakers high, high, high,

Shake your shakers!

[Repeat with low, “touch the floor”, fast “just like that” and/or slow, “Watch them go”]

[To the Tune of “The Noble Duke of York”]

**Egg Shakers up, egg shakers down**

Egg shakers dancing

All around the town!

Dance them on your shoulders,

Dance them on your head

Dance them on your knees

And tuck them into bed!

## Transition/Wiggle Songs

### **Wiggle your fingers**

Wiggle your toes  
Wiggle your shoulders  
And wiggle your nose!

Now wiggle your whole self  
Jump all around  
Now put your finger on your lips  
And we'll all sit down!

### **Everybody, wave your hands around in the air**

Wave 'em like you just don't care!  
Now take one finger,  
Put it to your lips,  
And say, "Sssh!"

## Goodbye Songs

[To the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star]

### **Goodbye, goodbye, everyone**

Now we all have had our fun  
Reach up high and stretch just show,  
Now wave goodbye; it's time to go  
Goodbye goodbye everyone,  
Come back next time for lots more fun!

[To the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush]

### **This is the way we wave goodbye,**

Wave goodbye, wave goodbye  
This is the way we wave goodbye,  
Goodbye until next time!

# Family Engagement Strategies

## 1. Form Relationships

- Many of your patrons return to the library for Storytime on a regular basis. Taking the time to develop trusting relationships with families and caregivers will give them the confidence to learn new skills.
- Learn the patron's names
- Get to know families and caregivers –their backgrounds, their interests, their aspirations.

## 2. Build a learning community

- Families and caregivers of young children often come to Storytime looking for community. Building the community that sustains families and caregivers is an important way to support children's healthy development.
- Be intentional about welcoming all kinds of families, including families of children with disabilities.
- Create time for dialogue among adults.

## 3. Use "I notice..." statements to describe families' and caregivers' effective actions.

- Families and caregivers often make good decisions on behalf of the children they care for. One of the best decisions that they make is to bring their children to Storytime.
  - i. Ex. "I notice that you always look right at your infants eyes when you sing to him. This is important because he will learn by imitating the movements and sounds you make with your mouth."
  - ii. Ex. "I notice that you always check out the book that we read at Storytime. This is important because young children learn through repetition. When you read the book at home, your child will have the opportunity to ask questions and talk about her favorite parts."

## 4. Use self-talk to describe your choices.

- Self-talk simply means you are modelling your thought process—you let families know how and why you make decisions.

- i. Ex. "I chose this book because I know how interested in trains this group is, and children are more likely to engage with books when you follow their interests."
- ii. Ex. "I see these toddlers need to move their bodies, so let's all stand up and get ready to dance. Let's feel the rhythm of these words in our bodies. This is going to help these kids be able to break down long words when they start reading."

#### 5. Provide information

- There are many different ways that librarians provide information about early literacy to families and caregivers – through handouts, access to resources, and literacy asides.
- Provide messages through multiple modalities because different people learn in different ways. When you develop relationships with the families you support, it is easier to know when and how to provide new information.
- If early literacy messaging feels uncomfortable for you, it may help to start by talking to parents 1-1 about early literacy skills during playtime until you build the confidence to transition this language to the whole group.

#### 6. Model

- Librarians model early literacy supports during Storytime in many ways.
- Model the 5 practices: talking, singing, reading, playing and writing.
- Model following children's interests and choosing books that are the "just right" level for their age group
- Model intentional interactions with children during playtime.

#### 7. Engage in reflective dialogue with families and children

- Families and caregivers are their children's first and best teachers and it is important for them to feel empowered in this role.
  - i. Ex. "What does your child most look forward to about Storytime?"
  - ii. Ex. "Why do you think she likes that so much?"
  - iii. Ex. "She has been working on that drawing about *Swimmy* for a long time! How does your child engage with writing materials at home?"

# Movement Breaks

Movement breaks are an important tool to keep children engaged during any type of program. If children's physical needs are met then it lessens the chance for undesired behaviors to occur. Movement breaks increase children's ability to pay attention and focus! This is also a great way to encourage caregivers to move and engage with their child. Incorporating movement breaks into programming will help children remain calm, attentive and willing to participate.

## **March in Place**

Have children stand up and march. As they march children can count, recite ABCs or sing a song!

## **Two at Once**

Have students do two different movements at once. Examples include rubbing bellies and tapping head or waving hands and jumping.

## **Move Like a \_\_\_\_**

Fill in the blank! Have children transform into different types of animals, fictional characters or

## **Wake Up the Body**

Children will wake up their bodies by moving different body parts. Examples including blinking eyes, wiggling fingers and opening and closing their mouths!

## **Body Patterns**

Have children turn their movement into patterns! Some examples are "two claps, two stomps, two claps, two stomps etc." "pat head, turn in a circle, pat head, turn in a circle etc."

## **Wiggle, Wiggle, Freeze!**

Get the wiggles out by having children wiggle their bodies and then stop when you yell, "freeze!"

## **Yoga Poses**

Introduce a few simple yoga poses. Some great children's yoga poses include warrior, tree and cat/cow.

# Open Ended Question Examples

- Based on the title what do you think this story will be about?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How do you think the story will end?
- What would happen if...?
- How does this make you feel?
- What would you do in this situation?
- Can you tell me about the story we just read?
- How is this story similar/ or different to other stories we have read?
- What happens when you feel.....?
- How do you think the characters are feeling?
- Why do you think \_\_ does \_\_\_\_?
- What did [the character] do to get that result?
- What are the things that [the character] will need to....
- What do you think will happen next?
- What happened when [the character]...
- What else can [the character] use to...
- Why did [the character] do that?
- How do you think [the character] is feeling? What would change his feelings?
- What would you do/ how would you feel if you were...?
- What do you see happening in this picture?
- Did it \_\_\_\_\_ when [the character] \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- Oh, you mean [the character] could ..... Why do you think that?
- Tell me what [the character] is thinking now...
- Did you notice how \_\_\_\_\_ when [the character] \_\_\_\_\_?
- Did this book end the way you thought it would? Why?